

Welcome to

FAMILY FOCUS

Especially for families and friends of deployed soldiers. Information, events, and programs brought to you by Tobyhanna Army Depot Army Community Service.

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WHAT'S NEW?

Child Care Providers Across The Nation Volunteer Their Services

May 12, 2004

EMBARGOED

Contact: Jason Knoch, Director of Marketing and Communications
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Washington, DC - NACCRRA, the Nation's Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, today announced the launch of Operation Child Care, a national, voluntary effort of local child care resource and referral agencies and child care providers to provide a few hours of free child care for National Guard and Reserve military personnel returning for two weeks of rest and recuperation leave from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The announcement was made during a press event held at the Senate Russell Office Building, just prior to a hearing of the Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, Subcommittee on Children and Families, chaired by Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN). The hearing, sponsored by Senator Alexander and Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), is one of a series focusing on military families and parenting issues during times of conflict over the past year.

Operation Child Care is led by NACCRRA in partnership with the National Cooperative Extension System, the National 4-H Program, the National Child Care Association, the National Association of Family Child Care, and the Child Care Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "The child care community's response to Operation Child Care has been overwhelmingly positive," said Linda Smith, Executive Director of NACCRRA. "All of us – at the national, state and local levels – are united in our desire to give back to those risking their lives to keep us safe."

Child care providers and trained 4-H youth in cities and towns across the country are being recruited by local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies to support the "citizen soldiers" from their local communities. Child care providers who meet state and local child care regulations will provide four or

more hours of free child care so that service members can attend to family business, or take their spouses out for a date. Operation Child Care was designed for National Guard and Reserve personnel because they do not typically have access to the military family support programs provided to active duty personnel. Child care providers who volunteer their time for Operation Child Care will receive official recognition. But most seem to feel the same as Linda Kitzmiller, a state licensed and nationally accredited family child care provider from Washington County, Tennessee, "You don't have to recognize me – I am just thrilled and honored to be able to do something to help our troops."

National Guard and Reserve members with valid military identification and leave orders will be able to access Operation Child Care services by calling NACCRRRA's national Child Care Aware® hotline, 1-800-424-2246, or by visiting the Web site at www.ChildCareAware.org. Service members will be connected to the local Child Care Resource and Referral agency in their community who will link them to participating child care providers.

Any child care provider who meets state and local child care regulations and wants to volunteer is welcome and encouraged to participate in Operation Child Care by calling the Child Care Aware® hotline or their local child care resource and referral agency.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Army Family Team Building

What: Management Skills: Communication

When: June 15, 2004 @ 1300 - 1500

Where: Chapel Fellowship Hall Building 1008 (no religious affiliation)

RSVP: By June 11, 2004

Questions: Call Audrey DiNardo 570-895-8887 or e-mail Audrey.Dinardo@tobyhanna.army.mil

DID YOU KNOW?

Tips For Staying Occupied

Working: Working is often the best way to stay busy, but if you are a SAHM/D (Stay At Home Mom/Dad) or just don't want to work...try a new hobby.

Hobbies: You haven't had the time to do a project or learn something new? Consider this the perfect opportunity! Are you so down you can't even think of something that might interest you? Try MakeStuff.com. Cooking, crafts, gift ideas...they have it all!

Write Letters: Another good way to pass the time is to write letters to your service member. Although you don't have to keep it positive, it's a good idea to keep him/her from worrying about home during the stress of Basic Training. I've found writing a letter each evening to my spouse helped fill that void of not being able to talk to him daily. Try writing as if you are having a one-sided conversation and see how you feel. Also, if you need to get it all out, do! But remember, just because you wrote it does not mean you have to send it.

You can always keep it and show him/her your thoughts when they get home.

Keep A Journal: This can be a great way to deal with emotions as you adjust. Your journal may be something to cherish years down the road. As a military spouse, you will grow and be resourceful beyond your wildest dreams! Your journal, from the beginning of your life as a military spouse, will show how much you grew when you read through it years from now.

Exercise: I know this may be the last on your list of things to think about, but there are many benefits to consider. Exercising helps boost self-esteem, reduce stress levels and releases beneficial chemicals in your brain that help you feel better.

COMMISSARY FAST FACT



Staying Connected to Your Commissary Benefit is Just a Click Away! Commissary Connection - an e-mail newsletter filled with information about promotions, sales and important commissary news - launched in late April. Customers can subscribe to the newsletter through a link on the front page of <http://www.commissaries.com> and need only provide an e-mail address; no personal information is required. Due to the increased anti-spam controls put in place by many e-mail service providers, customers will need to add the address commissary.connection@deca.mil to their address books, safe lists or contact lists before subscribing to prevent delivery problems. For more information, read the release at <https://www.commissaries.com/documents/news/news2004/deca22-04.pdf>.

How To Help Others Cope With A Loss

Sgt. Mom - 30 March 2004



None of us want to face the fact that our loved one, or the loved one a friend might lose their life serving our country. It could happen while deployed, on a training exercise or even a car accident at home. It may not even be our loved one in the military that we lose.

Unfortunately death is a fact of life and we need to be prepared to cope with it.

We are all faced at some point in time with the awkward feeling of not knowing what to say when someone we know has lost a loved one. Often the most important thing is not what you say, but what you do. They may need someone to just sit with them without talking.

Other times they may need someone to just listen. Let them “babble” away at whatever comes to mind at the moment. They are under great stress from a life altering event and are trying to “process” all this means to them and how their life will change now.

Try to put them in a “safe” place to speak with you. Possibly go into an unoccupied room and close the door so they may feel free to speak their mind – no matter what they may be feeling at the time; anger, sorrow, loss, afraid or even numb to it all. There are no right or wrong feelings. Everyone must grieve in their own way. Even though it may pop into your head don't say, “Oh you don't mean that,” if they say something shocking to you. They need to feel safe to express their feelings without any judgment from you. Be patient and listen once again as they say the same thing or tell the same story over and over. If there is no one to take phone calls for them while you are talking, turn the off the ringer on the telephone and let the answering machine take the calls.

Don't be afraid to make eye contact with them and don't be afraid to cry with them. That lets them know you feel their pain too and they are not alone in this situation. Have an “open posture” towards them – face them squarely if seating allows. Place your hand on their shoulder or give them a hug if it's needed. Human contact is very healing and can be appreciated at times like this. If they do not seem open to physical contact, then don't try to force them to hug you. Take your cues from them.

Don't try to force food or drink upon them, but do offer it. It is very easy to need food or drink but not know it at the time. Most often they are overwhelmed and won't realize how hungry they actually are until they begin to eat. If they are not hungry, then offer something soothing such as a cup of hot tea, coffee, maybe even hot cocoa. They will need to keep their strength up for the coming days. Once they get through the immediate crisis the appetite will come back in time.

If possible, but the “in charge” person. Ask someone in particular to take phone calls and messages. Start making a schedule with others to provide meals or just to come visit. Offer to help with clearing out personal effects when they are ready. Some may want to do this alone, some may want company while doing this. It gives them a chance to remember their loved one and many wonderful stories that may accompany an object. Often they may want to tell these stories as they go through belongings. Remember that once the immediate needs have been taken care of there are still needs down the road. We all tend to get involved in our own lives again and forget they may need support still. Mark your calendar to call and check in on them once a month, every other week or what ever time frame you feel comfortable.

Once they are through the immediate crisis it is also nice to hear stories from you about their loved one. If a particular memory is special to you, let them know about it! Send a note to them about the story you hold dear. It will warm their heart, and if you tell them the story in the midst of the crisis they may not remember it. Send notes, flowers, or some sort of little “goody” just to let them know you are thinking of them. You might try to contact friends to have everyone write down a special memory and send any pictures to make a special memory album for them.

Don't expect them to be fine and dandy in X amount of time. Just because Aunt Martha

recovered from the death of her husband in 2 months does not mean your friend will do the same. It normally takes longer to process a sudden death than one from a long illness or plain old age. Even if they do seem to be coping and doing just fine you never know when a small thing might give them a setback. A certain smell can bring memories flooding back that they may not be prepared to handle at the moment. (The sense of smell is strongly connected with memories.)

This is a difficult time for all concerned. Any help or support you show will be greatly appreciated even if they do not tell you that at the time. They will remember your kindness and will be there for you in your time of need when you lose a loved one. It is a part of nature, a part of life, and something we should do for one another – helping those in need.

"A man's country is not a certain area of land, of mountains, rivers, and woods, but it is a principle and patriotism is loyalty to that principle."
George William Curtis

Family Focus is published monthly by Sonya Walls. It is filled with information, events, and programs designed for families and friends of deployed soldiers. .

To subscribe or unsubscribe, please send an e-mail message to Sonya.Walls@tobyhanna.army.mil.

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